

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2949

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANTIAGO 2746

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, SOPN, CI

SUBJECT: GALLUP POLL REVEALS STRONG SUPPORT FOR GOC AMONG
CHILEANS

1. SUMMARY: RESULTS OF NATIONWIDE POLL ON POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SITUATION TAKEN BY GALLUP IN JAN AND FEB 1975 WERE PUBLISHED APRIL 13. POLL WAS COMMISSIONED BY GOC, BUT THIS FACT WAS NOT MENTIONED IN PRESS. ON ITS FACE, POLL INDICATES OVERWHELMING SUPPORT FOR PRESENT GOC, VERY FAVORABLE IMAGE OF PRESIDENT PINOCHET, AND STRONG PREFERENCE FOR "STRONG AND AUTHORITARIAN" GOVERNMENT. THERE IS CONCERN AMONG ALL CLASSES RE ECONOMY, UNEMPLOYMENT, LACK OF HOUSING. GREATEST SUPPORT FOR GOC AND ITS POLICIES IS FOUND AMONG BETTER-EDUCATED, HIGHER-INCOME CLASSES, BUT AT LEAST HALF OF THOSE WHO GAVE GREATEST SUPPORT TO ALLENDE GOVERNMENT REPORTEDLY APPROVE JUNTA, AND POLL REPORTS LITTLE ACTIVE DISCONTENT WITH GOC. WE ARE SKEPTICAL THAT REAL PUBLIC SUPPORT IS AS GREAT AS POLL INDICATES, CONSIDERING CONSTRAINTS ON FREE EXPRESSION IN CHILE AND APPARENT BIAS IN SOME QUESTIONS. GOC, HOWEVER, MAY BELIEVE IT IS AND ACT ACCORDINGLY. COPY OF GALLUP SUMMARY OF POLL (OBTAINED PRIVATELY) POUCHED TO ARA/BC. END SUMMARY.

2. GALLUP INTERNATIONAL RESEARACH INSTITUTES, INC. CONDUCTED A NATIONWIDE POLL IN CHILE IN JAN AND FEB 1975 TO DETERMINE ATTITUDES TOWARD PRESENT GOC, MILITARY AND THEIR POLICIES.
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ALTHOUGH WIDELY PUBLICIZED IN PRESS BEGINNING APRIL 13,

NO RPT NO MENTION HAS BEEN MADE OF POLL'S SPONSORSHIP. EMBASSY HAS LEARNED THAT GOC ITSELF COMMISSIONED POLL, HOWEVER, AND THIS IS GENERAL PUBLIC ASSUMPTION. POLL WAS DIRECTED BY LUIS FERREIRA, SOUTH AMERICAN AREA REPRESENTATIVE FOR GALLUP. ABOUT 2,000 CHILEANS WERE INTERVIEWED IN 22 PROVINCES EXCLUDING ONLY SPARSELY INHABITED FAR SOUTH. SUMMARY OF PRINCIPAL RESULTS FOLLOWS.

3. ECONOMY: 64 PERCENT OF RESPONDENTS SAID THEY WERE BETTER OFF AFTER THE COUP THAN BEFORE; 19 PERCENT SAID THINGS WERE THE SAME; 13 PERCENT SAID WORSE. GREATEST SATISFACTION WAS FOUND AMONG UPPER AND MIDDLE CLASSES, GREATEST DISCONTENT AMONG THE LOWER CLASSES CONCENTRATED IN URBAN AREAS OF CENTRAL CHILE. BUT EVEN AMONG THE POOR, 51 PERCENT FELT BETTER OFF AND 17 PERCENT THE SAME AS BEFORE. 87 PERCENT CITED HIGH PRICES AS MOST PRESSING PROBLEM.

4. PROSPECTS FOR SHORT AND LONG-TERM FUTURE: IN SHORT TERM, ONLY 45 PERCENT OF CHILEANS FEEL ECONOMIC SITUATION WILL IMPROVE; 25 PERCENT EXPECT THE SAME; 21 PERCENT EXPECT WORSENING. HOWEVER, 73 PERCENT OF CHILEANS WERE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT LONGER-TERM ECONOMIC PROSPEVTS.

5. WILLINGNESS TO SACRIFICE: 70 PERCENT THINK OTHERS ARE WILLING TO SACRIFICE EVEN MORE TO IMPROVE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC SITUATION; 75 PERCENT ARE WILLING TO SACRIFICE MORE THEMSELVES.

6. POLITICAL: ATTITUDE TOWARD GOC: 69 PERCENT WOULD ASK GOC AS MOST URGENT TASK TO CONTROL PRICES, INCREASE WAGES, CONTROL MERCHANTS, ETC. ONLY 2 PERCENT, PRIMARILY STUDENTS AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATED, REPORTEDLY ASKED FOR "RETURN TO LIBERTY AND JUSTICE" AND "END TO PERSECUTION" AS MOST URGENT TASKS; ON OTHER HAND, 3 PERCENT CONCENTRATED AMONG THE UPPER CLASSES ASKED FOR HARDER HAND ON EXTREMISTS. 69 PERCENT EXPECT GOC TO BE ABLE TO SATISFY THEIR DESIRES IN TIME.

7. STYLE OF GOVERNMENT: 79 PERCENT PREFER "STRONG AND AUTHORITARIAN" GOVERNMENT, COMPARED TO 10 PERCENT PREFERENCE FOR "SOFT, GENTLE" GOVERNMENT (DICTIONARY EQUIVALENTS FOR QUESTION'S SPANISH "SUAVE"). GOC UNDERSTANDS BY "SUAVE,"

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AND QUESTION PROBABLY MEANT TO IMPLY, A TRADITIONAL CHILEAN GOVERNMENT OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND DIALOGUE. 88 PERCENT AGREE WITH GOC'S 1974 "PRINCIPLES OF GOVT" THAT LIBERTY OF EXPRESSION IS FUNDAMENTAL, BUT ONLY 57 PERCENT THINK GOC RESPECTS THAT PRINCIPLE. ANOTHER 17 PERCENT FEEL THERE IS "PARTIAL" LIBERTY OF EXPRESSION, AND 6 PERCENT BELIEVE GOC HAS NOT FOLLOWED IT. 77 PERCENT RATE RESTORATION OF LAW AND ORDER, UNITY AND SECURITY, AS GOC'S GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT. GREATEST

FAILINGS WERE RATED BY TOTAL OF 50 PERCENT AS ECONOMIC, INCLUDING UNEMPLOYMENT ; 13 PERCENT CITED AUTHORITARIANISM AND ARBITRARINESS (HUMAN RIGHTS, DETENTIONS, ETC.), BUT 7 PERCENT FOUND THE GOC "TOO MILD." "AUTHORITARIANISM" WAS MOST CRITICIZED BY UPPER CLASS (16 PERCENT), COMPARED TO 10 PERCENT IN MIDDLE AND LOWER CLASSES.

8. GOC AND PRINCIPLE INTEREST GROUPS: RESPONDENTS BELIEVE COUP FAVORED ALL GROUPS WITH SOLE EXCEPTION OF "POLITICIANS." MOST FAVORED WERE STUDENTS, THE CHURCH, BIG BANKS, PRIVATE ENTERPRISE, AND PEASANTS. LEAST FAVORED WERE RETIRED PERSONS, WORKERS, "HUMBLE" PERSONS, UNIONS, AND ON FAR END OF SCALE, POLITICIANS, WHOM 81 PERCENT THOUGHT WERE MOST INJURED.

9. PERFORMANCE OF GOC AND IMAGE OF PINOCHET: 74 PERCENT REPORTEDLY GAVE A "GOOD" OR "BETTER THAN AVERAGE" RATING TO GOC PERFORMANCE. ONLY 5 PERCENT RATED IT "WORSE THAN AVERAGE" OR "BAD," AND 7 PERCENT ABSTAINED. PRESIDENT PINOCHET APPARENTLY HAS A VERY POSITIVE IMAGE IN HIS PEOPLE'S EYES, WITH 76 PERCENT FEELING THAT HE "TRIES TO HELP ALL CHILEANS." THERE WERE FEW CLASS DIFFERENCES OF OPINION ABOUT PINOCHET.

10. VIEW OF ARMED FORCES: LARGE MAJORITY VIEW IS THAT THE MILITARY ARE WELL-ORGANIZED AND CAREFUL, UNITED, KNOW HOW TO RUN THE COUNTRY, ARE REASONABLE AND WILLING TO LISTEN. ON OTHER HAND, ONLY 53 PERCENT FOUND THEM "EDUCATED AND CONSIDERATE" AND 47 PERCENT FELT THEY "KNOW WHAT THEY THINK AND WHAT THEY ARE GOING TO DO."

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INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

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11. PRIORITY OF ELECTIONS AND RESTORATION OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION: POLL ASKED ONLY ONE QUESTION RELATED TO THIS, AND GALLUP SUMMARY RECOGNIZES THAT WORDING OF QUESTION WAS BIASED. POLL ASKED IF RESPONDENT PREFERRED RETURN OF POLITICAL PARTIES AND ELECTIONS OR RPT OR IMPROVEMENT OF ECONOMIC SITUATION. 85 PERCENT PREFERRED ECONOMIC IMPROVEMENT; GALLUP WARNED AGAINST DRAWING CONCLUSIONS FROM THIS.

12. DESIRE TO EMIGRATE: ONLY 10 PERCENT OF CHILEANS WANT TO EMIGRATE, AND THESE ARE CONCENTRATED IN THE UNIVERSITY LEVELS (PERHAPS REFLECTING NORMAL BRAIN-DRAIN SYNDROME, NOT NECESSARILY DISCONTENT WITH GOC). POLL COMMENTARY EMPHASIZES THAT THIS IS WELL UNDER GALLUP FIGURES REPORTED FOR US, UK AND OTHERS.

13. TERRORISM AND EXTREMISM: 68 PERCENT OF CHILEANS BELIEVE STRUGGLE AGAINST EXTREMISM IS TERMINATING OR ALREADY OVER.

14. COMMENT: VALIDITY OF POLL MAY BE QUESTIONED. WE ARE SKEPTICAL THAT EVEN WITH BEST OF INTENTIONS, ASSURANCES OF ANONYMITY AND GALLUP'S PROFESSIONAL HONESTY, CHILEANS TODAY FEEL COMPLETELY FREE TO EXPRESS THEIR TRUE FEELINGS. THERE ALSO APPEARS TO BE ELEMENT OF BIAS IN CHOICE OF QUESTIONS AND WORDING. AS EXAMPLES, GALLUP'S SUMMARY INDICATES THERE WERE ORIGINALLY MORE QUESTIONS ON ELECTIONS, BUT THEY WERE DROPPED. ALSO, ASKING CHILEAN SIMPLY TO COMPARE HIS WELL BEING IN TODAY'S RELATIVELY STABLE ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES
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TO WHAT IT WAS DURING CHAOS AND POLITICAL/ECONOMIC CONFRONTATION OF LATE ALLENDE PERIOD IS CALCULATED TO PRODUCE ONE RESPONSE; ALTERNATIVE OF ECONOMIC STABILITY UNDER AN EFFICIENT, REGIME OF A DIFFERENT NATURE, MIGHT WELL PRODUCE SOMETHING DIFFERENT. PROBABLY A MAJORITY OF CHILEANS RECOGNIZE THAT THERE IS NO REALISTIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE MILITARY AT THE MOMENT FOR THE PRESERVATION OF SIMPLE LAW AND ORDER AND BASIC ECONOMIC STABILITY. THIS DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN THAT MANY CHILEANS WOULD NOT PREFER ANOTHER TYPE OF REGIME ENJOYING SIMILAR CAPABILITIES. FINALLY, CHOICE OF "SUAVE" TO DESCRIBE ALTERNATIVE TO PRESENT REGIME IS QUESTIONABLE, WITH ITS IMPLICATION OF A WEAK, POLITICS-RIDDEN REGIME LEADING TO A LEFTIST TAKE-OVER.

15. FOR FOREGOING REASONS, WE TEND TO DOUBT THAT POLL IS NECESSARILY ACCURATE REFLECTION OF TRUE FEELINGS OF CHILEANS. NEVERTHELESS, GENERAL SUPPORT EXPRESSED FOR GOC IS IMPRESSIVE AND REINFORCES OUR IMPRESSION THAT JUNTA RETAINS STRONG HOLD ON SYMPATHIES OF MANY CHILEANS. WHAT GOC AND ITS SUPPORTERS

THINK THE POLL SHOWS IS ALSO IMPORTANT, AS IS HOW THIS WILL BE REFLECTED IN THEIR ACTIONS. JUNTA POLITICAL ADVISER ALVARO PUGA EARLY IN APRIL GAVE EMBOFF SOME SALIENT POINTS FROM POLL. HE SAID THEN IT WAS BEING HELD TIGHTLY (AS WAS CASE WITH PREVIOUS POLLS BY DIFERENT ORGANIZATION). PERCENTAGES BEGAN TO LEAK, HOWEVER, AND GOC OBVIOUSLY DECIDED PUBLICATION WOULD HELP IT.

16. PUGA SAID GOC LEADERS AND PINOCHET IN PARTICULAR WERE GREATLY HEARTENED BY POLL RESULTS AND THOUGHT THEIR POSITION IN THE COUNTRY STRENGTHENED. PUGA'S REMARK WAS MADE IN CONTEXT OF CONVERSATION ABOUT POSSIBLE CHANGES IN GOC POLICY RESULTING FROM FOREIGN PRESSURES, AND IMPLICATION WAS THAT GOC WAS SURE ENOUGH OF ITS POPULAR SUPPORT TO WITHSTAND PRESSURE.

17. POLL'S FINDINGS MAY HAVE HEARTENED PINOCHET TO EMBARK ON RECENT CABINET CHANGES AND MORE STRINGENT ECONOMIC MEASURES, AND THEY SHOULD ENCOURAGE HARD LINERS WHO BELIEVE GOC HAS NOTHING TO FEAR FROM CHILEAN PEOPLE AS RESULT OF ITS HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES AND AUTHORITARIAN CHARACTER. (ON THE OTHER HAND, POLL SHOWS PEOPLE THINK TERRORISM IS NOT NOW CONFIDENTIAL

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A MAJOR PROBLEM, WHICH IN LOGIC SHOULD MAKE IT HARD TO JUSTIFY CONTINUING REPRESSION.)

18. GOC SUPPORTERS IN MEDIA ARE NOW CITING POLL AS EVIDENCE THAT GOVERNMENT'S POLCCIES AND ATTITUDES ARE CORRECT. POLL WILL THUS SUPPORT CAMPAIGN ALREADY GOING ON TO SHOW THAT CHILE IS AN ISLAND OF STRENGTH AND GOOD SENSE IN A WESTERN DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM BESIEGED AND WEAKENED BY WORLD COMMUNISM.

19. IF APPROPRIATE, DEPARTMENT OR USIA MAY WISH TO ASK GALLUP ORGANIZATION FOR COMMENT ON VALIDITY OF THE POLL AND ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES UNDER WHICH IT WAS CONDUCTED.
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